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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ANKARA 002125

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR NEA DAS RYAN CROCKER, NEA/NGA;
NSC FOR HADLEY;
OVP FOR JOHN HANNAH;
OSD FOR BILL LUTI AND OSD/NESA;
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/31/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TFIZ01: KHALILZAD DISCUSSIONS IN NORTHERN IRAQ

(U) Classified by Ambassador W. Robert Pearson. Reasons 1.5 b and d.

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: SPE Zalmay Khalilzad met with a range of Iraqi opposition leaders in northern Iraq on March 27-28. Discussions with PUK and KDP leadership centered on responding to Turkish concerns about northern Iraq, resolving the property claims of IDP's, and the formation of the Iraqi Interim Authority; discussions with the ITF's Sanan Aga revolved around how to resolve the issue of the ITF joining the opposition leadership council; and discussions with the INC's Ahmad Chalabi centered around his recommendation that there be uprisings in Iraq, and that the Iraqi opposition assist the U.S. militarily in the fight against Saddam. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Special Presidential Envoy to Free Iraqis Zalmay Khalilzad headed a U.S. delegation to northern Iraq on March 27-28. The delegation met in Suleymaniya with PUK leader Jalal Talabani and other PUK officials, in Dukan with the INC's Ahmad Chalabi, Sanan Aga of the Iraqi Turkomen Front, as well as Talabani again, and in Salahudeen with KDP leader Masoud Barzani and other KDP officials.

PUK Meetings

[1](#)3. (S/NF) SPE Khalilzad met with Jalal Talabani, PUK "Prime Minister" Barham Salih, former PUK "Prime Minister" and peshmerga commander Kosrat Rasul Ali and other PUK officials on March 27 and 28. With regard to Turkish concerns about refugee flows into Turkey, Talabani stated that the threat is much different now than in 1991, that Iraqis do not want to leave Iraq, and that current refugee flows within northern Iraq are minimal. He stated that the PUK already has considerable capacity to provide for refugees, asserting that the PUK and KDP have coordinated planning efforts, that combined PUK and KDP camp capacity is currently 200,000 refugees, and that the PUK alone has 10 camps, with generators, ready to go. Talabani said that the Kurds could increase capacity if provided with tents, medical supplies and food, and suggested that international NGOs, which have supplies prepositioned, could bring in supplies through Iran or Syria. He offered that the Turkish Red Crescent and UN were welcome to visit PUK camps to assess capacity, and that the PUK would provide maps and pictures of the camps to the USG for use with the Turks.

[1](#)4. (S/NF) On Turkish worries about increased PKK/KADEK terrorism, Talabani stated that the PUK is already sharing intelligence on a daily basis with the Turks on the PKK/KADEK, for which the Turks have been "grateful." He offered that Turkish Red Crescent officials could visit refugee camps to check for PKK/KADEK fighters, but asserted that "the PKK is afraid now because of the U.S. presence in Iraq - they will not move against Turkey, just as the Iranians won't get involved in Iraq." Talabani believes that the PKK wants amnesty, and that the majority of PKK adherents would lay down their arms if offered amnesty, but that the Turkish military and Turkish nationalist parties oppose amnesty. Talabani said that he told Turkey, "If the PKK moves against you, we're ready to help." He offered that if the Turks wanted to send an additional 15 officials to Chwar Qurna (just above Dukan Lake) to monitor PKK/KADEK activities, he would be amenable to their doing so.

[1](#)5. (S/NF) On the subject of potential mass movements of people to Kirkuk, and overall property reclamation issues, Talabani said that the PUK and KDP have formed a joint committee to discourage population movements - "everyone has a right to go back, but not unless it's in a legal, approved manner." He stated that both the PUK and KDP have made public statements discouraging Iraqis from taking the law into their own hands, and that he would continue to make such statements (Note: Talabani did make such a statement at a press conference following these meetings). Talabani was enthusiastic about SPE Khalilzad's description of the formation of a commission to deal with property claims, and asserted that his preferred structure for the commission

would be for one senior international figure to be in charge (he suggested Bernard Kouchner, Silvio de Mello, George Mitchell, Ed Djerjian, Nancy Soderberg or another former senior U.S. official). He was very supportive of SPE Khalilzad's suggestion that, given that the formal property claims commission could take some time to set up, an additional subcommittee be formed and deployed to towns such as Kirkuk as soon as possible to build confidence between the various ethnic communities and reassure local populations that a formal claims mechanism will be set up.

16. (S/NF) On the issue of forming the Iraqi Interim Authority (IIA), Salih asserted that the UN needed to be involved, "so that the US and UK don't take the inevitable blame alone." He stressed that who the UN representative will be is critical. Talabani and Salih were extremely concerned about SCIRI's role in the leadership council, and did not believe that the leadership council should be used as the vehicle to form the IIA, as the IIA would then end up with far too many Islamists. They both supported the idea of a "Baghdad Conference" to form the IIA, and suggested that the leadership council could assist in advising on who should be invited, although they then caveated that by asserting that after liberation, the U.S. should work with the core of the opposition that is supportive of the U.S. - KDP, PUK, INA and INC. They said that we must work with SCIRI now, "because they have the capacity to disrupt things," but following liberation advised that we not allow too much Iranian or Syrian influence. They also advised that we engage further and encourage non-SCIRI external influential Shi'a leaders - such as Seyyid Mohammed Bahr Al Oluum, Abdulmajid Al Khoie, Ibrahim Jaafari, and Shaykh Sahlani (who resides in Los Angeles). Talabani asserted that after the war, opposition politics will shift dramatically, and there will "immediately be two fronts in Iraq - the secular democrats vs. the fundamentalists like SCIRI." On the issue of the Iraqi Turkmen Front joining the opposition leadership, Talabani said he was willing to resolve the issue according to whatever agreement SPE Khalilzad was able to negotiate between the KDP and ITF.

17. (S/NF) Talabani disavowed the opposition leadership statement that had been issued earlier that day, asserting that it differed from what he had provided to the other oppositionists, and that SCIRI and Ahmad Chalabi had hijacked the statement to serve their desire for a provisional government to be formed. He said that he did not support a provisional government and instead backed the notion of a Baghdad Conference to form the IIA. He did, however, note that he would prefer the IIA be called a government, vice an authority, but stated that he knew such a change would have to be agreed to by the coalition. Talabani named some influential contacts that he has inside Iraq (ex-Baathists such as Fawzi Fayman, retired General Najib Taleb and Masid Shirazi), and offered to provide a list with a range of names for us to contact once inside central and southern Iraq. He also recommended secular Shi'a and former Iraqi Minister of Justice Ahmad Haboubi (resides in Cairo) as still very influential inside Iraq.

KDP Meeting

18. (S/NF) SPE Khalilzad met with Masoud Barzani, KDP "Prime Minister" Nechirvan Barzani, KDP "Foreign Minister" Hoshyar Zebari, KDP "Deputy Prime Minister" Sami Abdul Rahman, and other KDP officials on March 28. Barzani began the meeting by thanking SPE Khalilzad for his work with the Turks, stating that he was encouraged by the recent changes in Turkish statements about northern Iraq. With regard to Turkish concerns about refugee flows, Barzani asserted that there will not be large refugee flows from northern Iraq since the situation is different from 1991 - "there was no clear regime-change policy then, and many of the villages that were destroyed in Anfal have now been rebuilt, and refugees can seek refuge there." Barzani did note that if the Iraqis used chemical weapons, it would "be a catastrophe much bigger than Turkish or Kurdish concerns." Barzani asserted that the KDP has fought the PKK/KADEK for years, and lost thousands of peshmerga in doing so. He said that the KDP would never accept PKK/KADEK using KDP territory as a base for terrorist activities against Turkey, and asserted that he had designated three peshmerga divisions to use against the PKK if they began to undertake terrorist actions, including against Turkey. Barzani stated that "currently, we are focused on regime change, but after liberation the U.S., Turkey, and the Iraqi Kurds can work together to focus on dealing with the PKK." As evidence of his antipathy towards the PKK/KADEK, Barzani said that Farhad Ocalan (Abdullah Ocalan's brother) had recently sent him a telegram offering his assistance against Turkey; Barzani said he responded that the KDP did not need Ocalan's help, rather that he viewed the PKK as terrorists, and that the KDP was allied with Turkey against the PKK. Barzani also said that the security of Turkish troops currently in northern Iraq will be safeguarded even in the event of a conflict with Turkey - "they came as monitors, and we received them as guests - these particular troops should be treated as an exceptional case."

9. (S/NF) Barzani stated that he has given KDP peshmerga clear instructions to not go into Mosul and Kirkuk, and that they need to cooperate fully with U.S. commands. He claimed that "the KDP has no intention to move into those cities," and that he wants to avoid intra-ethnic violence. Barzani said that he had made statements recently discouraging people from taking the law into their own hands, and would continue to do so. (Note: Barzani did make such a statement at a press conference following this meeting. End note.) He also said that he would meet soon with "influential people from the Arabized regions," and would inform them of the KDP's stance against violence. Barzani was supportive of the idea of a property claims commission being set up to address IDP property claims. He did not like the idea of the UN controlling a commission, and said he'd get back to us with his preferences for its organization shortly.

10. (S/NF) On the issue of ITF representation on the opposition leadership council, Barzani insisted that Turkmen from different groups needed to get together, and then could jointly choose ITF official Junejd Mengu as the Turkmen representative on the opposition leadership (rather than Mengu simply being appointed). He insisted that Mengu would have to make a statement upon joining the leadership council affirming the results of the London and Salahudeen conferences, accepting that Iraq's future will be governed by the approved Iraqi constitution, and stating that Mengu is representative of all Turkmen, not just the ITF.

11. (S/NF) Like Talabani, Barzani was taken aback by the March 27 opposition leadership council statement, asserting that he had never seen it, and disagreed with the section about a provisional government. He said he supported the idea of a Baghdad Conference to form the IIA, and said the UN should play a supporting role. He offered to provide the U.S. with a list of respected Sunni and Shi'a figures inside Iraq. Barzani firmly stated that the Baghdad Conference cannot be based on the "Salahudeen percentages," which he said are not accurate or representative of the Iraqi people, and gave SCIRI far too big a share of seats. However, he said that we need to find some justifiable basis upon which to invite Iraqis to the Baghdad Conference.

12. (S/NF) Nechirvan Barzani stated that because of the Turkish fight against the PKK, 10,000 Turks reside in northern Iraq, having fled Turkey due to the violence. Nechirvan said that Turkish MFA U/S Ugur Ziyal and TGS had approached him in Ankara about permitting those 10,000 refugees to return to Turkey now. Nechirvan said that the KDP would not let those refugees return in the immediate future, as they feared that the Turks would assert that they were part of a problematic refugee flow into Turkey from northern Iraq, thus justifying a Turkish military move into northern Iraq.

ITF Meeting

13. (S/NF) ITF leader Sanan Aga reneged on his earlier pledge to SPE Khalilzad that in order to join the opposition leadership council, he would sign a letter stating that he accepted the principles of the London and Salahudeen conferences, as well as acknowledge that he would recognize the official Iraqi names for various regions of Iraq, including "Iraqi Kurdistan." Aga stated that he did not accept the terminology "Iraqi Kurdistan." He initially stated that he did accept the principles of the London conference (except for federalism) but later walked back from that, explaining that he needed to check with the rest of the ITF as to whether that was acceptable. Following the meeting, he sent SPE Khalilzad a letter dated March 29, 2003, that reads as follows (informal translation from Arabic):

Begin text of letter:

The Iraqi Turkmen Front accepts the following points:

a) Enabling the Iraqi people to build a fully representative and democratic government that meets international standards, including free and fair elections, respect for the rule of law and private property, equality before the law and respect for human rights, consistent with principles agreed by the opposition at the London Conference, and in light of the Iraqi opposition movement meeting held in Ankara on 19 March 2003, with the participation of the US and Turkey.

b) That the constitution and future political system of Iraq should be determined through the full participation and free consent of the totality of the Iraqi people.

End text of letter.

Chalabi Meetings

14. (S/NF) Ahmad Chalabi met twice with SPE Khalilzad on March 27, bringing a variety of former Iraqi military officers (including General Mehdi Dulaymi, Colonel Ahmad Samarra, General Talal Obaidi), Qayser Wutwut, and Mudhar Shawkat to the second lengthier meeting. Chalabi asserted that there needs to be an uprising of the Iraqi people, and that the USG should stop telling them not to rebel, and instead encourage uprisings. He urged the U.S. to destroy Saddam Hussein's TV and media capabilities. Chalabi was

adamant that the Kurdish peshmerga not be used in any attack on Kirkuk, and said he was greatly concerned by reports that the peshmerga were now 15 kilometers outside Kirkuk. He recommended that the "joint command of the Iraqi opposition forces" be immediately activated. Chalabi and the military officers present were disparaging of U.S. military operations in Iraq, stating that the U.S. had made a major mistake by not including the opposition in their efforts (Note: None of the oppositionists present made any reference to the Free Iraqi Forces set up by the USG. End note). Chalabi asserted that INC forces, which he claimed were 4,000 strong, should be launched from northern Iraq to fight the Iraqi military, and said that he was preparing operational plans to submit to the Pentagon.

¶15. (S/NF) Chalabi said he supported the ITF joining the opposition leadership council, as long as they stated that "we support the Salahudeen conference, and accept the process of selecting and completing the opposition leadership council."

¶16. (S/NF) Comment: We need a senior diplomatic presence in northern Iraq as soon as possible, to be the eyes and ears of Washington in the area, and to liaise closely with the Iraqi oppositionists in the north to ensure that they do not undertake any actions unhelpful to U.S. goals. End Comment.

¶17. (U) This cable has been cleared by SPE Khalilzad.
PEARSON